



NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DWR Co-Sponsoring Workshop on Reauthorizing Drought Early-Warning System

SACRAMENTO -- The Department of Water Resources (DWR) this month will co-sponsor a workshop discussion of the merits of federal reauthorization of the nation's drought early-warning system.

The September 24-26 workshop in San Diego will review the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) and other federal agency drought programs from the perspective of states. This will include discussions of gaps in the prediction and early warning of droughts.

The NIDIS program was authorized by federal legislation enacted in 2006. The authorization sunsets at the end of 2012. Managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), NIDIS was to provide a drought early warning system and coordinate federal research related to drought early warning. The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held a hearing to review the NIDIS program in July: <http://science.house.gov/hearing/full-committee-hearing-drought-forecasting-monitoring-and-decision-making-review-national>

Co-sponsoring the September 24-26 workshop with DWR is the Western States Water Council, in coordination with the Western Governors' Association.

The workshop will be held in the Doubletree Hotel at 1646 Front Street, San Diego, beginning at 1 p.m. on September 24. It will end at noon on September 26. The

agenda and logistics information may be found at http://www.westgov.org/wswc/NIDIS%20workshop_Sep2012.html.

This summer's intense, and unforeseen, drought that gripped much of the central U.S. illustrates the need for improvements in drought prediction. Water year 2012 was a dry year overall in California, and in the Colorado River Basin, an important source of imported water for Southern California. Unfortunately, it is not possible to predict with reasonable certainty what water year 2013 will bring for California.

Most of California's precipitation originates from the Pacific Ocean. During winter, the atmospheric high pressure belt that sits off western North America typically shifts southward, allowing Pacific storms to bring moisture to California. On average, 75 percent of the state's average annual precipitation occurs between November and March, with half of it occurring between December and February. A few major storms more or less shift the balance between a wet year and a dry one. A persistent high pressure zone over California during the peak winter water production months predisposes the water year to be dry.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.